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CONCEPT OF DHYANA IN CLASSICAL YOGA LITERATURE WITH RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT SCENARIO

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Yoga

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science of healthy living. The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj', meaning 'to join' or 'to yoke' or 'to unite'. As per Yogic scriptures the practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body, Man & Nature. According to modern scientists, everything in the universe is just a manifestation of the same quantum firmament. One who experiences this oneness of existence is said to be in yoga, and is termed as a yogi, having attained to a state of freedom referred to as mukti, nirvana or moksha.

Within the vast spectrum of yoga practices, there exist various types catering to diverse needs and preferences. Hatha Yoga, perhaps the most familiar, emphasizes physical postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama) to attain harmony between mind and body. Ashtanga Yoga, characterized by its dynamic flow of postures, promotes strength, flexibility, and inner focus. Kundalini Yoga incorporates breathwork, movement, mantra chanting, and meditation to awaken the dormant energy at the base of the spine and achieve spiritual enlightenment. Alongside these physical practices, meditation plays a central role in many yoga traditions, facilitating mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual growth. Techniques range from concentration-focused practices like Dharana to mindfulness-based approaches such as Vipassana. Regardless of the specific type, the ultimate aim of yoga and meditation remains consistent: to cultivate holistic well-being and deepen one's connection to the self and the universe. Raja Yoga is a comprehensive yoga system which deals with the refinement of human behaviour and personality through the practice of the yamas (restraint) and niyamas (disciplines); attainment of physical health and vitality through asanas (postures) and pranayamas (pranic breathing techniques); management of mental and emotional conflicts and development of awareness and concentration through pratyahara (sensory withdrawal) and dharana (concentration); and developing the creative aspect of consciousness for transcendental awareness through dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (absorption in the universal identity).

The Samadhi becomes Sahaja or natural through long practice of Nididhyasana and not through Pranayama or any Hatha Yogic practice. A Raja Yogi enters into the meditative mood deliberately by practising Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara and Dharana. A Bhakta enters into the meditative mood by cultivating pure love for God. A Vedantin or a Jnana Yogi enters into the meditative mood by acquiring the four means, hearing the Srutis and reflecting on what he has heard. A Hatha Yogi enters into the meditative mood by practicing deep and constant Pranayama.

1.2 Meditation





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Meditation has its roots and has always been mentioned in the religious contexts throughout history. It carries different meanings in different contexts. Meditation has been practiced since antiquity as a component of various religious traditions and beliefs. In the prehistoric religion, the practice of meditation involved repetitive, rhythmic chants which today are commonly referred as Mantras. Mantra Meditation is now just a part of this larger practice of meditation. Meditation often involves an internal effort which helps in selfregulating the mind in some way. It may involve generating an emotional state for the purpose of analysing states like anger, hatred etc. It also helps in cultivating a particular mental response to various phenomena, such as compassion. It has calming effect and direct awareness inward until pure awareness is achieved. There are dozens of specific styles of meditation practices, but no matter how many different methods are there to meditate, they all lead to one single path of self-discovery. The earliest written records on meditation (Dhyana) date back to 1500 BCE and have come from the Hindu tradition of Vedantism. The vedas provide an insightful description of the meditative traditions in ancient India. Around the 5th and 6th centuries BCE, other forms of meditation developed via Confucianism and Taoism in China as well as Hinduism, Jainism, and early Buddhism in Nepal and India. As per the Christian Meditation in the West there is no such repetition of any phrase or action and it even doesn't requires any specific posture. Monk Guigo II in the 12th century defined its four formal steps as a ladder. The four latin terms used for this were; lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio (i.e. read, ponder, pray, contemplate). In India, Buddhist meditation was considered as a step towards liberation.

Dhyana is a term used for the seventh anga (limb or level) in the eight-step Yoga practice of Sage Patanjali. This state is penultimate to Samadhi or "absorption." Unfortunately, the word dhyana is usually translated as meditation, implying a state of abiding calm. Let us briefly see what dhyana is. Earlier to practicing dhyana, the relevant steps of Yoga, namely, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, and Dharana should be practiced. The details of these steps are explained in many books dealing with the aphorisms of Sage Patanjali. Yama is to abstain from violence, falsehood, theft, sensory overactivity, and acquisitiveness. Niyama is practicing purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures, and surrendering to a higher principle. The next two steps of asana and pranayama are well known with body postures and breathing facilitating proper gross and subtle fluid flow (blood, lymphatic, chi, and pranic flow) in the body. While practicing asana, concentration on a particular principle (e.g. infinite void) is recommended. While practicing pranayama, one should be in a state of dharana (one pointed attention). Pursuing the above limbs of Yoga, the practitioner realizes the changes in the physical and mental makeup. Pratyahara is stopping the flow of information from outside by turning the mind inward. Dharana is maintaining a single focus in the mind's eye. Dhyana has many components; it is usually translated as meditation, which does not carry the full import of dhyana. Here, an attempt is made to present the distinction between dhyana and meditation.

Meditation One-pointed awareness, ekagrata, of an object or thought process is dhyana, meditation. In his discussion of sapta sadhana, the seven means or practices, in Chapter 1, Sage Gheranda defined pratyaksha by saying that if the subtle experiences of the mind can be clarified in front of the inner eye, the inner mental vision, just as clearly as when something is seen in front of the open eyes, that is considered to be a state of meditation. This state of pratyaksha is not the state of laya, dissolution, where one does not see anything. Neither is it a state of sensual experience. On the contrary, it is a state in which one sees an inner experience, feels it and establishes oneself in it.

"Dhyanamnirvishayammanah":-That state of the mind wherein there are no Vishayas or sensual thoughts is meditation.

"Tatra pratyayaikatanatadhyanam":-A continuous flow of perception or thought is Dhyana (meditation). There is continuous current in the mind of one object like the flow of water in a river (Pravaha). There is only one Vritti in the mind. It is Ekarupa-Vritti-Pravaha.

Meditation is the keeping up of an unceasing flow of God-consciousness. It is the flow of continuous thought of one thing or God or Atman, like the continuous flow of oil (Tailadharavat). All worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind. The mind is filled or saturated with Divine thoughts, Divine glory and Divine presence. Meditation is regular flow of thought with regard to the object of concentration. Meditation follows concentration. Meditation is the seventh rung or step in the



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ladder of Yoga. Yogi's call this "Dhyana." Jnanis term this 'Nididhyasana.' Bhaktas style this 'Bhajana.' The ultimate goal of meditation is self-realization. All the halts and breaks along the way are not the destination. We have to reach the self or the soul. We practice the perception of breath, but breath is not the soul. We practice the perception of the body, but the body is not the soul. We even take an internal journey but that too is not the soul. These are all just the stepping stones to reach our ultimate goal, which is realization of the soul or Self. Our body is a gateway to the soul. From the standpoint of spiritual practice, the body is more important than the soul. Let us understand this with an example. There is a pot filled with water, we are thirsty, and drinking the water quenches our thirst. But the question arises whether the pot is more important than the water? Definitely, the water is more valuable than the pot, but without a receptacle, how can the water be contained? We cannot ignore the importance of the receptacle. The receptacle has its own place, and that which is contained in it has its own importance; the pot is the receptacle and that which is contained in it is water. Similarly, the body is the receptacle and the soul resides in it. In order to experience self, we should first perceive our body because without it the soul cannot be realized. A powerful technique for selfrealization and pacification of our emotions is the perception of our chakras also termed as the psychic centres.

1.3 TYPES OF MEDITATION

There are different kinds of meditation. A particular kind is best suited to a particular mind. The kind of meditation varies according to taste, temperament, Capacity and type of mind of the individual. A devotee meditates on his tutelary deity or Ishta Devata. A Raja Yogi meditates on the special Purusha or Isvara who is not touched by the afflictions, desires and Karmas. A Hatha Yogi meditates on the Chakras and their presiding deities. A Jnani meditates on his Self or Atman. You will have to find out yourself the kind of meditation that is suitable for you. If you are not able to do this, you will have to consult a teacher or preceptor who has attained Self-realisation. He will be able to know the nature of your mind and the correct method of meditation for you.

The mind assumes the form of the object it cognises. Then only perception is possible. A Bhakta constantly meditates on the form of his tutelary deity or Ishta Devata. The mind is always takes the form of the Deity. When he is established in his meditation, when he attains the stage of Para Bhakti or supreme devotion, he sees his Ishta Devata only everywhere. Then names and forms vanish. A devotee of Lord Krishna sees Lord Krishna only everywhere and experiences the state described in the Gita "Vaasudevah Sarvam ItEverything is Vaasudeva (Krishna) only." A Jnani or a Vedanti sees his own. Self or Atman everywhere. The world of names and forms vanishes from his view. He experiences the utterances of the seers of the Upanishads: "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma-all indeed is Brahman."

Meditation is of two main kinds, viz., Saguna (concrete) meditation and Nirguna (abstract) meditation. In concrete meditation the Yogic student concentrates on the form of the Lord Krishna, Rama, Siva, Hari, Gayatri or Sri Devi. In abstract meditation he concentrates the whole energy of the mind on one idea of God or Atman and avoids comparisons of memories and all other ideas. The one idea fills the whole mind.

When you see the concrete figure of Lord Krishna with open eyes and meditate, it is the concrete form of meditation. When you reflect over the image of Lord Krishna by closing your eyes, it is also concrete form of meditation but it is more abstract. When you meditate on the infinite, abstract light it is still more abstract meditation. The former two types belong to Saguna form of meditation, the latter to Nirguna form. Even in Nirguna meditation there is a concrete form in the beginning for fixing the mind. Later on, this form vanishes and the meditator and the meditated become one.

Saguna meditation is meditation on a Murty or form of the Lord. This is a concrete form of meditation for people of devotional temperament. This is meditation with Gunas or attributes of God. Repeat the name of the Lord or pure OM. Think of His attributes, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, etc. Your mind will be filled with purity. Enthroned the Lord in the lotus of your heart amidst a blazing light. Mentally think of His feet, legs, chest, head, hands and the ornaments and dress and again come to His feet. Again and again repeat this process.



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Imagine that there is a fine garden with lovely flowers. In one corner there are beautiful cabbage-roses. In the second corner there is the "lady of the night." In the third corner there are Champaka flowers and in the fourth, jasmine. First meditate on jasmine. Then take the mind to the rose. Then to the "lady of the night" and finally to the Champaka. Again rotate the mind as above. Do this again and again for 15 minutes. Gross meditation like this will prepare the mind to finer abstract meditation on subtle ideas.

Dhyana (meditation) is of two kinds viz., Japa-Sahita Dhyana, i.e., meditation attended or associated with Japa, and Japa-Rahita Dhyana, i.e., meditation without any Japa or pure meditation only. When you repeat: "Om Namo Narayanaya" mentally or verbally, it is mere Japa. When you repeat the Mantra and at the same time you meditate on the form of Hari with conch, discus, mace, lotus, yellow cloth (Pitambara), armlets, bracelets, etc., it is Japa-Sahita Dhyana. When you progress in meditation the Japa will drop by itself. You will have meditation only. This will constitute Japa-Rahita Dhyana.

Just as the light is burning within the hurricane lamp so also the divine flame is burning from time immemorial in the lamp of your heart. Close your eyes, merge yourself within the divine flame. Plunge deep in the chambers of your heart. Meditate on this divine flame and become a flame of God. Withdraw the Indriyas from the objects. Propitiate the Lord by your Supreme Tapas. Meditate on Lord Hari, get into the dazzling divine car and reach the supreme abode of Vishnu. 10

OM Meditation



Have the figure 'OM' in front of you. Concentrate on this. Do Trataka also with open eyes (steady gazing without winking, till tears flow profusely). This is both Saguna and Nirguna meditation (with and without attributes). Keep a picture of OM in your meditation-room. You can do Puja for this symbol of Brahman. Burn incense, etc., and offer flowers. This suits the modern educated persons. This is abstract meditation on Nirguna Brahman. Repeat OM mentally with Bhava (feeling). Associate the ideas of Sat-Chit-Ananda, Purity, Perfection, "All-Joy | am," "All Bliss I am." "There is no world. There is neither body nor mind. There is only one Chaitanya (pure consciousness). | am that pure Consciousness. This is Nirguna meditation (without attributes).

Meditation on Mahavakyas is tantamount to meditation on OM. You can take up either "Aham Brahma Asmi-I am Brahman" or "Tat Tvam Asi-That thou art." These are the Mahavakyas or the great sentences of the Upanishads. Meditate on their significance. Deny or negate or throw out the Koshas and identify with the one essence that lies behind them. Meditate. Purify your mind. Practise concentration in a solitary room. Then squeeze out the Upanishads and the Gita from your heart. Do not depend upon imperfect commentaries. If you are sincere, you will understand the real. Sankalpas (thoughts of the Rishis of the Upanishads and Lord Krishna, what they really meant when they uttered those wise Slokas (verses) in scriptures. Unfold the Divinity that is lurking in your heart by concentration and meditation. Do not waste your time. Do not waste your life. Meditate. Meditate. Do not lose even a single minute. Meditation will remove all the miseries of life. That is the only way. Meditation is the enemy of the mind. It brings about Manonasa or the annihilation of the mind.

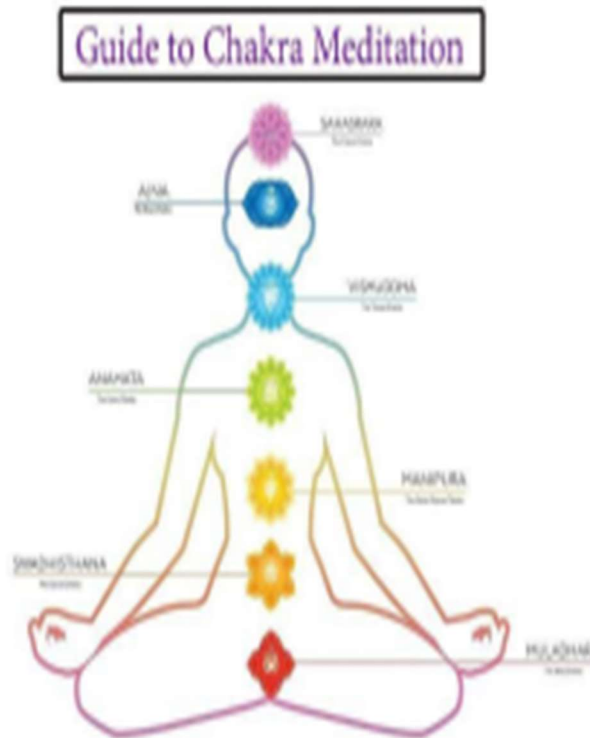


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Meditation is of two kinds, viz., concrete and abstract. If you meditate on any picture of a concrete object, it is concrete meditation. If you meditate on an abstract idea, or any quality (such as mercy, tolerance), it is abstract meditation. A beginner should practise concrete meditation. For some, abstract meditation is more easy than concrete meditation. Consciousness is of two kinds, viz., focussing consciousness and marginal consciousness. When you concentrate on Trikuti, the space midway between the two eyebrows, your focussing consciousness is on the Trikuti.

Guide to Chakra Meditation



Chakra meditation is an Eastern spiritual practice that dates back thousands of years. The earliest references to it are found in ancient Indian yogic texts dating back to around 1500–1200 BCE.¹ It was later adopted by other spiritual systems, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. “Chakra” is a Sanskrit word that means “circle,” “disc,” or “wheel,” says Helbert. There are seven chakras in total, positioned from the base of the spine to the top of the head.² Although the chakras aren't scientifically recognized, in the context of this belief system, they are invisible energy centers within the body that vibrate and spin with energy.



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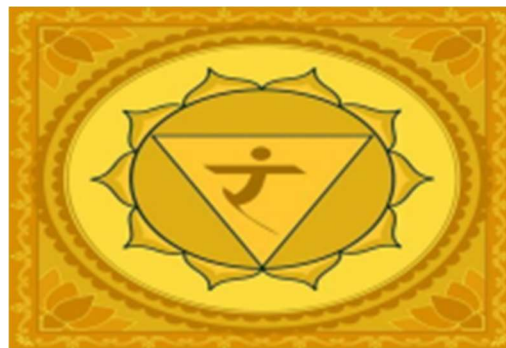
The **root chakra (Muladhara)** is at the base of the spine and governs safety, security, and stability. When imbalanced, it can cause insecurity, doubt, and loneliness.



The **sacral chakra (Svadhithana)** is in the lower abdomen and is associated with sexuality and creativity. When blocked, it can cause envy, lust, and jealousy.



The **solar plexus chakra (Manipura)** is between the navel and diaphragm and controls individuality. When blocked, you may feel depressed or fatigued.





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The **heart chakra (Anahata)** is in the middle of the chest and is associated with love, compassion, and friendship. When imbalanced, you might feel anxious or detached from yourself.



The **throat chakra (Vishuddah)** is in the throat and governs communication and gratitude. When blocked, it can cause suppressed emotions and shyness.



The **third eye chakra (Ajna)** is between the brows and is associated with intuition and clarity. When imbalanced, you may be irrational or angry.





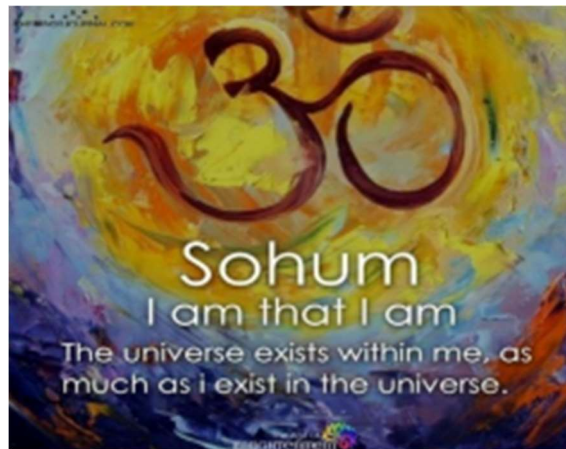
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The **crown chakra (Sahasrara)** is at the top of the head and controls intelligence and spirituality. When blocked, it can cause arrogance.

Each chakra influences the glands in its vicinity.² Therefore, each chakra corresponds to different qualities and functions, Helbert explains. Imbalances or blockages in any of the chakras are linked to physical or mental health problems. Chakra meditation helps us realign the chakras and bring our body back into balance. When the chakras are aligned and activated, they vibrate at a higher frequency, giving us energy and vitality.

So-Hum Meditation



"Soham" means "He | am" or "I am He", "I am Brahman." "Sah" means "He." "Aham" means This is the greatest of all Mantras. This is the Mantra of Paramahansa Sannyasins. This is an Abheda-Bodha-Vakya which signifies the identity of Jiva or the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Self. This Mantra comes in the Isavasya Upanishad: "Sohamsmi."Soham is only OM. Delete the consonants S and H. You get OM. Soham is modified Pranava or OM. Some like 'Soham' better than 'OM.' Because they find it convenient and easy to associate it or mix it with the breath. Further there is no effort in doing Japa of this Mantra. If you simply concentrate on the breath, if you simply watch the breath, that is quite sufficient.

Meditation on 'Soham' is same as meditation on OM. Some repeat a compound Mantra "Hamsah Soham Soham Hamsah." Before you practise Soham Dhyana or meditation on "Soham" you must practise the NetiNeti (not this, not this) doctrine. You must negate or deny the body and the other Koshas by repeating "NahamIdamSariram"- "Aham Etat Na." "I am not this body, mind or Prana. | am He, |am He-Soham, Soham!"Repeat this Mantra mentally. You should feel with all your heart and soul that you are the Allpervading, Omnipotent, All-blissful Soul or Brahman. This is important. Then only the full benefits of meditation or Japa of this Mantra will be realised by you. Mere mechanical repetition will not help you much. It has its own benefits. But maximum benefits can only be realised in feeling. Feeling is Self-realisation.

If intellect tries to feel, "I am Brahman, I am Omnipotent" and the Chitta tries to feel, "I am a clerk in the chief court; I am weak; I am helpless. What shall I do for money for my daughter's marriage? I am afraid the judge will fine me," realisation is not possible. You must destroy all wrong Samskaras or impressions, all false imaginations, all weaknesses, all superstitions and all vain fears. Even if you are in the jaws of a tiger, you must powerfully roar "Soham."

The repetition of the compound Mantra "Hamsah Soham -Soham Hamsah," creates a deeper impression. The late famous Sri Sheshadri Swami of Tiruvannamalai used to repeat this compound Mantra. When he moved alone in the streets and bazaar he repeated this Mantra. He meditated on this compound Mantra. We say 'God is Love-Love is God.' Similarly



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repetition of 'Hamsah SohamSoham Hamsah,' gives more force. This intensifies the force of the Mantra. The aspirant gets more internal strength from the Atman or the Soul-force. His conviction grows stronger. This sort of repetition corresponds to the repetition of the Mahavakya, "Aham Brahma Asmi. Brahmaivahamasmi-| am Brahman. Brahman am I."

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is the process of being fully present with your awareness. Being mindful means being aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not being overly reactive to what's going on around us. Mindful meditation can be done anywhere. Some people prefer to sit in a quiet place, close their eyes, and focus on their breathing. But you can choose to be mindful at any point of the day, including while you're commuting to work or doing chores. When practicing mindfulness meditation, you observe your thoughts and emotions but let them pass without judgement.

Transcendental Meditation

Transcendental meditation may sound lofty, but it's actually a basic technique: You choose a mantra a word, a phrase, or a sound and repeat it for 20 minutes twice a day. It's best to do this seated, with your eyes closed. Meditating this way helps your body and mind to fully relax, so that you can feel a sense of peace and calm.

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